A STUDY OF STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES ADOPTED BY UNIVERSITIES

SHORT SYNOPSIS

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by

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DECLARATION BY THE SCHOLAR

I hereby declare that the short synopsis entitled **"A Study of Stakeholders' Perception towards Sustainable Practices Adopted by Universities"** being submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** in the Department of Commerce under the **School of Management and Commerce** of **Manav Rachna University, Faridabad**, during the academic year **2024-25**.

It is the work expected to be carried out under the supervision of **Dr. Pragati Chauhan**.

Further, it is declared that the short synopsis is within the plagiarism limit and copy of the same is attached as per the University norms.

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CERTIFICATE BY SUPERVISOR

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Abstract

Introduction: There is an emerging consensus that embedding sustainability within HEIs is increasingly vital in the global effort to move toward the United Nations SDGs. This present research focuses on the Delhi/NCR region, dealing with sustainability issues in HEIs from the lens of stakeholder perception. The paper fills the gaps between understanding, implementation, and assessments of sustainability frameworks in Indian Universities and bridges theoretical and practical insights.

Objectives: The paper reviews the range of sustainability-related initiatives within Indian HEIs; assesses criteria for reviewing such practices; develops a model for sustainability assessment integrated with perceptions from stakeholders; and presents a comparative analysis between public and private universities.

Methodology: The mixed-method approach consolidates quantitative survey results with qualitative content analysis. While the survey considers perceptions by numerous stakeholders, on the other hand, content analysis examines sustainability disclosures instituted in various reports. Regression, factor analysis, and other sophisticated statistical methods are used for data analysis along with thematic coding.

Key Findings and Implications: Identification of critical sustainability parameters of Indian HEIs includes education, research, outreach, campus management, etc. Stakeholders' priorities highlight the fact that institutional strategies should be fully aligned with stakeholder expectations. A holistic sustainability assessment model was developed for which actionable policy recommendations were proposed. Comparative analyses showed that significant differences exist among public and private universities regarding sustainability initiatives; hence, there is an urgent need for differential approaches in the development of such initiatives.

Originality: The study contributes a new, stakeholder-driven model of sustainability assessment in the Indian context. It covers the issue of the voluntary nature of sustainability in HEIs and places the findings within the contexts of SDG 4 and SDG 13 to reinforce the role of universities as agents of societal change.

Keywords: sustainability in higher education, stakeholder perceptions, Indian universities, Sustainable Development Goals, public and private universities, sustainability assessment.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Significance of the Study

The challenges of balancing human development with environmental sustainability have gained much momentum worldwide, as virtually every aspect of life has increasingly relied on natural resources. It is for this reason that education has a critical role to play in molding future leaders and haline them with the relevant tools they need to grapple with the challenges of environmental protection. The United Nations introduced the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 and underlined the crucial role education, especially higher education, will play in the advancement of sustainable development. SDG 4 is about quality education; thus, it provides a focus towards developing a culture of sustainability within a higher education setting. Pedro et al. backed the idea by stating that only universities, by virtue of their potential hubs of knowledge and innovation, can uniquely act as a catalyst toward sustainable development. Such universities can make direct contributions regarding the global agenda for sustainability by infusing sustainability within their operations and curricula.

The mega-size and diversity of the education system in India vividly displays the gamut of opportunities and challenges in integrating sustainability into higher education. As revealed by the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), 2020–21, the number of universities in all categories is more than 1,100, with 43,796 colleges and 11,296 standalone institutions. Despite such enormity, the GER for higher education in India is at an extremely low figure of 27.3%, far from attaining the target set by NEP 2020 at 50%. The contradiction here is twofold: one which calls for an increase in higher education, yet at the same time, makes sure that campus institutions are finding their way to sustainable practice and minimizing their ecological footprint. Indian universities are not only places for learning; rather, they have become major consumers of resources in terms of energy, water, and materials. Thus, this gives a moral and practical imperative to adopt and advance the cause of sustainability.

This trend of higher education for sustainability is a worldwide emerging trend, reflecting the growing awareness of universities from passive consumer to active advocate of sustainability. Sustainability at universities has evolved over the years and encompasses sustainable campus operations, curriculum, community, and transparent reporting practices.

Education is one of the greatest roles that universities can contribute towards a future that is sustainable. By offering courses in sustainability, universities can enable future leaders to become prepared for a variety of challenges in the journey towards sustainable development. However, mere introduction of sustainability as a subject is not enough. The research has indicated that for meaningful change to take place, there is a need for a holistic approach, integrating sustainability in every aspect at the university: research , curriculum, operations and outreach. This will call for serious rethinking of the traditional education system, which generally was biased towards disciplinary knowledge over interdisciplinary approaches, in order to gain a deeper conceptualization of sustainability.

It is in this light that research underpins the importance of transparent reporting toward the growth of accountability and enabling continuous improvement. However, there exist quite a few general sustainability reporting frameworks for universities-for instance, the Global Reporting Initiative and Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System-providing means for universities to measure and report on their respective performances concerning sustainability. Such framework adoptions have always remained varied in different regions where funding and available resources are seriously short of desirable positions.

Despite such barriers, a number of Indian universities have taken exemplary steps towards becoming sustainable. For instance, Jamia Millia Islamia University initiated a range of programs such as biowaste management, use of solar energy, and rainwater harvesting. It makes it clear that Indian universities can serve as role models and can inspire other universities to follow in similar direction. Nevertheless, not having a uniform system for measurement and reporting keeps them from having a larger impact on the society.

1.2. Research Problem

1.2.1 Poor awareness of concerns over sustainable practice

Increased awareness that university operations must become part of an integral part of universities worldwide is inhibited through a lack of a general awareness of key stakeholders' understandings, and with it, such integration is not adopted. Included in such key stakeholders are students and teachers, alumni, and faculty and staff down to any administration workers who can have an impact and/or can be impacted through such integration of sustainable operations. Despite such a lack of general awareness, motivation, and perceived barriers, such continues unexplored and under-appreciated.

Such a challenge is even more compounded in a country like India, with its massive diversity in terms of its stakeholders. On the basis of studies conducted, students in general will opt for it, when and only when career development and employability become intertwined with environment sustainability, and faculty members believe that curricular and research-related sustainability is a concern. That re-emphasizes that in groups of stakeholders, everyone prioritizes differently, and in case of administration workers and alumni, most of them prioritize operational efficiency over programs for sustainability. In the absence of that full range of perspectives, universities cannot make effective, meaningful programs in sustainability.

1.2.2 Poor Frameworks for Measuring University Sustainability in India

The absence of a uniform model for evaluation in terms of sustainability is yet another key challenge for an Indian HEI. Unlike companies having to abide by strong environment and society-related requirements in terms of governance, university adopted approaches towards sustainability have evervoluntary in character. Thus, its voluntarism character generates discrepancies in its definitional character, processes of its execution, and reporting in such a way that variation intensifies level-wise, institution-wise, institution-wise

Global frameworks such as the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) and Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) have provided methodologies for tracking and reporting, but have been designed in Western settings that could not possibly have in view India's specific university problems, such as funding restrictions, infrastructure constraints, and cultural diversity, and therefore make overall use of such frameworks practically impossible in India's HEIs (Kwatra et al., 2021).

The most of present evaluation programs in India for sustainability concern, for example, National Assessment and Accreditation Council of India, NAAC. All such evaluations performed by it and most of India's campus have no academic and administration-related orientation but environment and social orientation towards sustainability. In such a narrow field, most such campus have no regard for significant factors concerning reduced carbon footprint, community engagements, ethics in consumption of assets, and many such factors.

The lack of uniform frameworks, in reality, widened the gap in attempting to become sustainable between private and public universities; while a small group have been successful in formulating model strategies in biowaste and solar energy management, many lack even minimum statistics about their performance in terms of becoming sustainable.

1.3. Significance of the Study

1.3.1 Systematic Assessment, to Ensure That Indian Universities Undertake Sustainable Practices

The following research addresses the mentioned challenges by attempting a systematic review of sustainability practices at Indian universities in Delhi, analyzing stakeholder perceptions and institutional capacities, thus providing an overall understanding of the elements determining sustainability in higher education institutions. Such an evaluation is crucial to establishing strengths and weaknesses and developing effective recommendations for changes.

The key contribution of this research, therefore, is inclusivity. While most of the existing studies focus on one environmental dimension, this study has put forth a connected approach toward environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Diverse stakeholder contributions ensure that the solutions worked out are effective and equitable.

1.3.2. How Sustainability Is Integrated into Strategic Planning and Operations

The current study also tries to propose a model for integrating sustainability within the strategic planning and operation at the HEIs of India.

Such a framework would make the Indian Universities increase their global rankings. Considering the fact that sustainability is about to become the yardstick to evaluate universities the world over, there is always the likelihood of sustainability-oriented institutions having a bigger number of the finest student talents, as well as researchers with good money at their disposition. Kwatra et al., 2021 observed that such a framework pioneers the Indian Universities in developing pathways from mere ad hoc initiatives to serious, systematic strategies of long term-oriented policies.

1.3.3. Increased Relevance towards SDG 4 and Other Related Goals

Another key focus of this work has been the alignment of Indian universities with SDG 4 and other international goals. Instead, it places Indian universities in a leadership role within international trends in the global higher education system.

The research also gives an indication of how universities might serve as an agent of society-wide change. As a consequence of integrating sustainability into university operations and curricula, wider societal attitudes have shifted on issues regarding the necessity of sustainability.

1.3.4. Responding to the Voluntary Character of Sustainability in HEIs

Sustainable actions of the Universities are still voluntary in nature and doesn't have an mandate.

1.3.5. Preparing the Leaders of Tomorrow for Sustainability

Finally, this research has brought forth the role that HEIs could play in graduating future leaders with a sense of environmental responsibility. The integration of sustainability into the curriculum will offer students the requisite knowledge and practical skills to face the complex challenges of the world. The result will not only be enhanced employability of graduates but also better preparation of graduates for taking up sustainable development challenges in professional and personal life.

It also outlines the role that sustainability education plays in wider society. Students who experience the concept of sustainability are found to be more likely to carry on the concept into their private lives, where there is a virtuous cycle of education and societal change, reinforcing the message of sustainability back into education.

2. Literature Review

The literature review will undertake a critical discussion of existing theory, frameworks, and empirical studies that have relevance to the objectives and research questions of this thesis. It thus lays a platform for studying sustainability practices in higher education institutions,

stakeholder involvement, and framework development for sustainable development at specific contexts.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Various established models and theories underpin the theoretical grounding for this study to provide insight into sustainability in HEIs, stakeholder engagement, and its institutional behavior. This chapter discusses four major frameworks:

Sustainability Model for HEIs by Naif Alghamdi and Alexandra den Heijer

The model of sustainability for HEIs put forward by Alghamdi and Heijer is a systematic means of considering sustainability in universities through integrating five core dimensions: management, academia, environment, engagement, and innovation. This model emphasizes the interlinking nature of institutional functions and their aggregate contribution to driving sustainability.

- Management: Administrative framework for the development, implementation, and monitoring of sustainability initiatives.
- Academia: How curriculum and research contribute to knowledge and innovation that support sustainable development.
- Environment: Includes physical infrastructure and resource use, as well as ecological consequences of university operations.
- Engagement: Collaboration within the internal and external communities of students, faculty, and the community.
- Innovation: Designing and embracing new technologies and practices to enhance sustainability.

The model acts as a yardstick against which the state of sustainability practices in HEIs can be tested and provides insight into how such dimensions can be applied to the institution's planning. Its application in this study allows a nuanced understanding of how HEIs in the Delhi/NCR region align their strategies with global standards of sustainability.

2. Triple Bottom Line Theory Elkington, 1997

The Triple Bottom Line framework broadened the traditional notion of organizational performance, which has been put forward by John Elkington. These three dimensions include economic, social, and environmental elements. The theory underlines the balanced approach

for sustainability where institutions take up a very important position for the interest of profit, people, and the planet as well.

- Economic Dimension: In this respect, it refers to the financial sustainability of HEIs regarding cost-efficient spending and resource allocation as well as for sustainability initiatives.
- Social Dimension: The contribution of HEIs to society in terms of community engagement, equity, and inclusivity.
- Environmental Dimension: The efforts of universities to reduce their ecological footprint through energy conservation, waste management, and sustainable infrastructure.

The TBL framework is most relevant to test the sustainability practices of public and private universities. The study has used this theory to judge the way institutions have balanced their competing priorities in delivering value along all three dimensions.

3. Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984)

The theory developed by R. Edward Freeman, known as Stakeholder Theory, prescribed the importance of stakeholders in the organizational wide or strategic decision-making processes. It is an idea that organizations must be concerned about to meet various needs and expectations of all their stakeholders for such long-term success and legitimacy.

In addition, several of the major stakeholders can include the following in HEIs:

- Internal Stakeholders : Students, faculties, staff members, and an administration.
- External Stakeholders: Alumni, industry partners, government agencies, and the broader community.

Stakeholder Theory provides insight into how the acceptance and performance of sustainability programs depend on the level of stakeholder involvement. Various literature cites that active participation by stakeholders enhances the design and implementation processes for sustainability practices by giving them a sense of ownership and responsibility. This study applies Stakeholder Theory to investigate different stakeholder perceptions and their consequences on the outcomes of sustainability.

4. Institutional Theory by DiMaggio & Powell (1983)

Institutional Theory explores how organizations respond to pressures, norms, and expectations from their external environment that shape behavior and practices. DiMaggio and Powell

developed the theory of institutional isomorphism, where organizations in similar contexts adopt similar practices due to coercive, mimetic, or normative pressures.

- Coercive Pressures: Regulatory requirements and policy mandates that force universities to adopt sustainability practices.
- Mimetic pressures are the tendencies of universities to copy practices perceived to be successful within peer institutions.
- Normative Pressures: The influence exerted by professional standards, academic networks, and general societal expectations.

In the context of sustainability practice variability between public and private universities, Institutional Theory can be particularly applied. Therefore, public universities are under coercive pressures to adhere to government policies, while private ones may adopt mimetic practices in order to be more competitive and gain a better reputation.

5. Social Learning Theory - Bandura, 1977

Social Learning Theory, itself formulated by Albert Bandura, explains psychologically how people adopt sustainable behavior. This theory postulates that behaviors are learned through observations, modeling, and reinforcement within a social context (Bandura, 1977). The framework is important in the realization of how students internalize the values of sustainability by observing examples from their institutions.

Such sustainable behaviors may be developed in the context of HEIs by creating visible role models and supportive environments to develop behaviors such as recycling, energy conservation, and participation in green initiatives. Example:

- Faculty members integrating sustainability into their teaching methodologies can influence students to adopt environmentally responsible practices.
- Peer-led campus sustainability campaigns tend to have better participation and long-lasting behavioral change.

This makes social learning theory particularly relevant for the program design that invokes role models for collective action toward university sustainability culture.

6. The theory of sustainable development - Brundtland, 1987

According to the Brundtland Report, Sustainable Development Theory describes sustainability as a development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of

future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland, 1987). It is one of the foundational concepts that may be used to explain the global movement for sustainability and how it finds application in higher education.

Some of the key principles in the Sustainable Development Theory that are relevant for HEIs to note include:

- Intergenerational Equity: There is an obligation of universities towards students by preparing them to cope with the upcoming challenges in sustainability.
- Resource Efficiency: Institutions shall adopt practices that minimize resource consumption and maximize societal benefits.
- Integrated Approaches: In the field of HEIs, sustainability needs to be pursued from an economic, social, and environmental perspective simultaneously.

The Brundtland definition insists on long-term thinking and holistic planning; it orients universities toward operations, curriculum, and community outreach for sustainable development.

7. Ecological Modernization Theory - Mol & Spaargaren, 2000

The Ecological Modernization Theory, developed by authors such as Spaaargaren and Mol, links technological innovation with environmental sustainability. It sustains that economic development and environmental protection are reinforcing each other. Breaking from prior conceptions-for instance, economic growth necessarily hurting the environment-it postulates that modern technologies, along with institutional reforms, lead to sustainable development.

In the context of HEIs, EMT underlines such technology-driven solutions' potential:

- Intelligent campus solutions that can monitor and optimize energy and water usage.
- Renewable energy systems, such as solar and wind installations, to reduce carbon footprints.
- Digital platforms for sustainability education and stakeholder engagement.

Ecological modernization theory has particular relevance for Indian HEIs, where resource constraints often drive the need for innovative solutions. The theory also aligns with national imperatives, such as India's renewable energy targets, which call upon universities to adopt leading-edge technologies that will improve their sustainability performance.

8. Systems Thinking - Senge 1990

Systems thinking was popularized by Peter Senge in the book The Fifth Discipline and is a holistic way of understanding elements that influence the sustainability of the organization. Systems thinking emphasizes the interdependent nature of many components within a system, including but not limited to people, process, and infrastructure. Emphasis is then placed on the flow-on effects or ripples a decision may make throughout the system.

Some of the fields where Systems Thinking can be applied in HEIs include:

- Analyze campus operations, academic programs, and stakeholder involvement in relation to each other.
- Identify feedback loops that reinforce or hinder sustainability efforts.
- Development of integrated strategies wherein the institutional goals can be brought together into broader objectives aimed at sustainability.

For example, a campus recycling program reduces not only waste but also changes student behavior, increases institutional reputation, and provides new opportunities for campus-local waste management agency partnerships. Systems Thinking encourages higher education institutions to pursue a multidisciplinary approach toward sustainability, harnessing synergies across different functions and stakeholder groups.

The theoretical frameworks and empirical insights discussed in this literature review provide a robust foundation for addressing the research questions and objectives of this study. This research will seek to integrate concepts from Sustainability Models for HEIs, the Triple Bottom Line, Stakeholder Theory, Institutional Theory, and other frameworks in order to have a comprehensive view about sustainability in Indian universities.

2.2 Key Scholarly Work

The exploration of sustainability within HEIs has undergone some significant changes in the last two decades, reflecting increased emphasis on setting educational practices in line with global sustainability goals.

The following section will present a full review of such studies: methodologies, key findings, and contribution towards the research questions. All such case studies contribute in a unique way towards a deeper understanding of the challenge and opportunity for increased sustainability in HEIs through an emphasis of the stakeholder perspective and institution environments.

1. According to Crocco, Giacosa, and Culasso (2022), They performed a state-of-the-art review concerning stakeholder practice in higher education,. This study synthesized data from an impressive number of HEIs worldwide through a systematic literature review approach. Among the main trends identified is the increased implementation of digital platforms for the interaction with stakeholders and participatory decision-making processes concerning sustainability issues. The study concluded that whereas stakeholder practices were indeed trending upwards, their inconsistency did mostly abound, especially at less-well-endowed institutions. It enhanced the understanding of good stakeholder involvement as one corner of sustainability within HEIs.
2. Chakraborty and Singh (2019) addressed integrating stakeholder voice systemically for the sustainability practice of HEI, focusing on the factors impeding greater awareness and stakeholder hindrances to academic institutions. Thus, effective development and an implementation framework approach would be critically enhanced with increasing continuous stakeholder involvement. The study proved that long-term sustainability goals would be realized only by putting the spotlight on stakeholder alignment and capacity-building activities.
3. Shrestha (2024) examined the efforts towards sustainability pursued by HEIs in terms of perceived perception in a South Asian context. Considering this, through survey and qualitative interviewing, an objective of institution in terms of sustainability in contrast with awareness in terms of stakeholders is noticed. Most respondents interviewed in the study regarded the efforts towards sustainability secondary to institution objectives, not part of the mission. Closing such gaps would entail reconciling institution objectives with perception through training programs and specific awareness programs in terms of sustainability.
4. Anholon, Rampasso, and Ávila (2024) provided some guidelines that might help in improving stakeholder management at HEIs. Through the empirical analysis, it was possible to identify key enabling factors for the effective stakeholder engagement-appropriate communication strategies and inclusive decision-making processes. From this study, the conclusion is derived that the application of an appropriate engagement framework is a factor that would give rise to the maximum satisfaction of stakeholders and also more effective implementation of sustainability initiatives. This study established that structured approaches toward the stakeholder management aspect are crucial for institutional sustainability.

5. Shams et al. (2019) explored higher implications for the involvement of stakeholders in the field of sustainability at higher education institutions from an interdisciplinary analysis perspective. This study used qualitative approaches, such as interviews with university leaders, to underline the potential that could be brought forth by multi-stakeholder engagement in inclusive settings for transformation. It was mentioned that a fully integrated approach toward stakeholders may provide new opportunities for institutional innovations and cultural change toward sustainability. The embedding development was underpinned at all levels by comprehensive strategies.
6. Hancock and Nuttman (2014) examined how sustainable transport initiatives act as a driver of stakeholder engagement in the sustainability programs of the HEIs. These authors adopted a case study methodology in which they studied the application of sustainable transport measures across universities in Australia. The study showed that transportation initiatives minimize environmental footprints and at the same time serve as a portal to wider stakeholder engagement in the sustainability programs. It intends to discuss how targeted initiatives may be applied in galvanizing stakeholders for embedding sustainability into institutional culture.
7. Wright's (2002) work investigated definitions and frameworks of environmental sustainability for itself in higher education, hence providing the first tangible insights on how sustainability might be conceptualized for HEI. Comparing the declarations of sustainability with institutional policies shared the themes that resource efficiency, community involvement, and integration into the curriculum were common themes. He emphasized that there was a need for a common framework through which institutional practice within HE could be contextualized within global goals of sustainability. This work laid the foundation for how HEIs could adopt comprehensive sustainability strategies while considering a variety of institutional priorities.
8. Lozano et al. conducted a systematic literature review to assess the competencies and pedagogies described as necessary in higher education to contribute to the development of sustainable development. Studying over 100 scholarly articles on sustainability competencies and innovative teaching methods, the authors developed a proposed framework that outlined how these approaches connected and related to sustainability competencies. The study accentuated active learning, interdisciplinary curricula, and involvement with stakeholders in furthering education about sustainability. In making these findings, the authors underscored the requirement that HEIs place such aspects at

the center of developing strategies through which students in the future could be prepared for leadership on sustainability issues.

9. Boer (2013) reviewed sustainability and social responsibility assessment frameworks for higher education. The study assessed various tools, such as the AISHE framework, which measures sustainability in learning programs, and made propositions for improvement toward bringing these tools closer to institutional realities. Boer used case studies of European universities to illustrate how frameworks must be adaptable to reflect regional and cultural contexts. The research has shown that robust assessment frameworks assist HEIs in monitoring their progress, identifying gaps, and working on the enhancement of their sustainability practices holistically.
10. Tilbury (2011), gave a global overview of the commitment of higher education to sustainability and underlined the increasingly significant role HEIs are playing in sustainable development. In analyzing the international declarations and initiatives like Kyoto and Talloires Declarations, Tilbury identified the key drivers of sustainability: policy advocacy, cross-sector collaborations, and institutional reforms. This calls for institutional mission alignment with the global sustainability agendas by giving a strategic overview on how the HEIs champion sustainable development in both local and global spheres of sustainability.
11. Gómez, Sáez-Navarrete, and Lioi have provided a flexible model for assessing the sustainability of higher education. In light of empirical research carried out with several HEIs, the authors have indeed proposed a flexible framework integrating environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainability. As noted by Gómez et al., the feedback from stakeholders is crucial to refining assessment models; also, participatory approaches enhance relevance and impact in sustainability initiatives. This thus provided evidence of how HEIs could contextualize their sustainability assessments in light of their specific priorities at the institutional level.
12. Žalėnienė and Pereira (2021) gave a more global overview of higher education's role for sustainability, anchoring on how institutions strategize in integrating sustainability into education, research, and operations. This study found best practices and challenges to embed sustainability across all institutional domains through the cross-sectional analysis of HEIs in Europe, Asia, and North America. The authors have indicated that the sustainability initiatives ought to be tagged to the United Nations' SDGs for better impact. The work, therefore, reinforces that a global outlook is necessary in solving such localized sustainability challenges.

13. Wals (2014) described the learning and institutionalization processes of sustainability in HEIs within the context of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). This study investigated the integration of sustainability into the curriculum, operations, and community engagement of HEIs worldwide during the DESD period. Wals claimed that despite significant progress, challenges like inadequate funding and resistance by stakeholders were still palpable. This research insisted on systemic approaches, placing sustainability at the core of how HEIs work in order to achieve better implementation of sustainability practices.
14. Loh, Friedman and Burdick, 2013 Studied Factors That Act as Promoters for Sustainability of educational innovations inside the Higher Education Institutions Utilised Questionnaires and interviews among the faculty members of the Institutions of higher learn-ing. Compared faculty perceptions to the existing frameworks for sustainability Institutional support, access to the relevant resources and collaborative decision making was noted as major enablers. The study has found out there was a mismatch in the focus on faculty priorities and institutional strategy to act towards the sustainability of the educational innovations. This study further supported the importance of taking faculty perspectives into consideration in sustainability planning, especially within curriculum development and resource allocation.
15. Owens 2017 This paper focuses on how the HE system has aligned within the Sustainable Development Goals. Specific SDGs like quality education are taken within this report to discuss how higher education institutions aligned their strategy based on case studies around Europe. Based on these Owens stated that "it is those institutions, which are committed to having an office dedicated to the mission of sustainability. as well as having sectoral partnership for sustainability would most likely consider the development of programs to take up working on attainment towards specific SDGS.". This study found that the SDG framework can act as a guiding framework for HEIs to systematize their sustainability effort initiatives and engage all stakeholders efficiently.
16. Figueiró and Raufflet, in 2015, carried out a systematic review about sustainability in higher education, focusing on management education. That study analyzed over 150 academic articles, which outlined some of the recurring barriers, such as resistance to change and lack of collaboration between disciplines. This paper proposes an integrating model for sustainability within the business and management curricula, focused on experience-based learning and stakeholder engagement. It thereby confirms the work of

other researchers, including the aspect related to the relevance of adapting sustainability initiatives for different academic needs.

17. Kapitulova, AtKisson, Perdue, and Will (2018) mapped the use of the Accelerator toolset to advance sustainability within HEIs. This mixed-methods research analyzed how universities deployed this toolset across three institutional dimensions-teaching, operations, and community engagement-and found that overall, institutions were more successful when they used holistic approaches to sustainability. The results underscored a call to integrated strategies dealing with sustainability on all fronts so that institutional policy is aligned with operational practices and educational goals.
18. Shriberg (2002) rated several instruments for various institutional analyses for sustainability into their relative strengths and weaknesses alongside their practical feasibility in colleges and universities, focusing on representative examples of now popular conceptual frameworks of Campus Sustainability Assessment Framework CSAF and the more recent Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System STARS and others. "Shriberg's conclusion had been that such a set provided helpful metrics sometimes; but then regularly lost wide adaptability and suitability to real institutional contexts because of its particular emphases. The study emphasized the need for flexible, sensitive assessment tools so that their appropriateness and effectiveness can be increased for use across different HEIs.
19. Aleixo, Azeiteiro, and Leal (2018) researched the adoption of sustainability practices among higher education institutions in Portugal. In this study, a survey approach was used to determine the extent to which energy-saving, waste management, and sustainable curriculum practice were adopted and the success pertaining thereto. The findings from this study indicated that there was a wide variation in the implementation of these innovative practices among higher education institutions and the main driving factors included available resources and committed leadership. It was concluded that the development of a sustainability culture needed to be developed through : leadership, policy, and stakeholder involvement.
20. Figueiró and Raufflet (2015) focused their work on the issue of sustainability in higher education but, this time, zoomed in on management education. This systematic review highlighted that experiential learning and service learning are relevant in fostering sustainability competencies among students. The authors also mentioned that HEIs must move from mere theoretical discussions on sustainability to more practical and interdisciplinary programs that involve solving real-world problems. The findings

contributed to supporting the integration of sustainability in all areas of higher education, from teaching and research to operations.

21. Loh, Friedman, and Burdick (2013) revisited offer a comparative analysis of faculty perceptions with the existing frameworks on how best to sustain educational innovations. A second lens in their work focused on creating gaps in institution policies that hinder long-term sustainability. Faculty, in general, focused on deeper pedagogies, but institution-wise, operational efficiencies mattered most. Authors encouraged harmonization in overall institution strategies and faculty-designed programs for long-term educational reform sustainability.

The examination of 25 books in review puts problematics and multidimensionality at the nucleus of university sustainability in sharp contrast. Together, these accentuate the greatest imperative for stakeholders' collaboration, frameworks for innovation, and an institution's planning for an institution-led path towards sustainability. Challenges in university integration of sustainability range but are not limited to, misalignment of stakeholders, lack of availability of resources, and variable use of frameworks.

The present study takes its cues from such rich observations and thus seeks to bridge present gaps towards developing a model for evaluation and improving sustainability in HEIs, with a focus in an Indian context. The reviewed literature thus forms a very sound basis for achieving the objectives of this research and provides a concrete platform for a comprehensive and actionable investigation into sustainability practices in higher education.

2.3. Research Gap

The existing literature on sustainability in HEIs contributes valuable insights into institutional practices, stakeholder engagement, and theoretical frameworks. However, gaps in existing studies have been significant, not least in relation to Indian HEIs. Identification of such gaps forms the background for this study. Gaps identified include:

1. Perceptions of Low Stakeholders in Indian HEIs

   Whereas, studies at an international level have stressed stakeholder involvement in terms of sustainability, review and survey illustrate a lack of studies in terms of students', faculty, alumni, and administration staffs' perception towards practice of sustainability in HEIs in India. It is incredibly important to explore these perceptions in a view towards creating participatory and effective programs of sustainability.

2. Weak contextual frameworks for sustainability in Indian HEIs

The most prevalent current frameworks for appraisal of sustainability have been developed in a Western context. Most, in fact, have no bearing at all on individual cultural, financial, and infrastructure-related issues HEIs have been suspected to face in India-which yet again renders it relevant to apply an altered model for a region. That will, in fact, enable them to become part of an iterative development in terms of the problem of sustainability at a general level and, in an Indian context, continuous.

3. Patched Adoption of Sustainable Practices in Public and Private Universities

Whereas variation in private and public university practice in terms of sustainability has been confirmed, comparative studies that can search out variation and best practice that can potentially be shared between institution types are relatively thin in terms of availability.

4. Underrepresentation of Non-Academic Stakeholders in Sustainability Research

The largest proportion of studies aims at academic stakeholders such as students and teachers. Most frequently, non-academic stakeholders such as administration, alumni, and community at large go underresearched. What they say actually forms a key part in knowing about overall institution sustainability.

5. Poor Integration of Sustainability in Curriculum and Research

Though it has been included in a range of courses in several universities, not much work has been done in terms of researching at what level sustainability is included in curriculums and studies in Indian HEIs. That reduces the level at which studies and training contribute towards objectives for sustainability.

6. Shortage of Common Metrics for Measuring Sustainability in Indian HEIs

The most universities in India don't use benchmarked performance measures for measuring their sustainability performance; therefore, evaluation and comparison cannot be performed. That lacuna identifies a necessity for creating benchmarked indicators in harmony with international standards, but in a manner that addresses local realities.

7. Sparse Research in Context with Obstacles in Implementing Sustainability

Whereas a small work identifies such obstacles, such as funding and infrastructure constraints, most work is limited in terms of describing in detail in which way such obstacles

afflict Indian HEIs. Identification of what obstacles exist will, therefore, be important in case a resolution is to be designed in an effort to counteract them.

These knowledge gaps highlights the need for a comprehensive study in understanding, through the perspective of stakeholders, the sustainability practices of Indian HEIs; formulate frameworks adapted to the region; and give actionable recommendations toward the challenges identified. This paper tries to fill the above-mentioned gaps and hence contribute to the academic debate on how to improve sustainability in higher education.

3. Research Questions and Hypotheses

3.1 Research Questions

The present study reflects on the state of sustainability in perceived stakeholders and the institutional practices of HEIs of the Delhi/NCR region. The following are the guiding research questions for the investigation:

1. What are the existing sustainability practices implemented by universities in the Delhi/NCR region?

This question tries to identify and inventory the sustainability programs currently pursued by the HEIs, including but not limited to waste management, use of renewable energy, sustainable infrastructure projects, and community-based engagement projects.

2. How well do the stakeholders perceive these sustainability practices to be effective?

This question examines the attitude and opinion of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and other stakeholders regarding the effectiveness of the sustainability initiatives adopted by their institutions.

3. What factors influence the adoption and implementation of sustainability practices in HEIs?

This question aims to identify key enablers and barriers, such as funding, institutional policy, stakeholder engagement, and infrastructural capacity, that impact the success of sustainability practices.

4. What are the differences in the state of sustainable practice between public and private universities?

The following question evaluates to what extent the institutional type-public or private-matters when it comes to the implementation and prioritization of sustainability initiatives.

5. How can stakeholder perceptions be used to advance sustainability in the HEI?

This question tests approaches to using stakeholders' feedback in refining and achieving sustainability frameworks and practices.

3.2. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses have been developed in an attempt to answer the following research questions:

H1: Stakeholders perceive universities to practice sustainability.

They have been hypothesised to believe in effectiveness and impact and therefore perceive most of their institution's sustainability efforts positively.

H2: There is a significant variation between private and public universities regarding level of sustainability practice approaches.

The following can serve as a hypothesis that can be posed: 'The institution type actually matters in terms of adopting and practicing programs for sustainability as seen in practice, prioritization, planning and budgeting'

H3: Stakeholder engagement level is a key driving force in enhancing effectiveness in terms of sustainability performance.

The essence in question is that active collaboration and consultation with stakeholders have a role in creating design, delivery, and effectiveness of programs for HEI sustainability

H4: There are universities with strong sustainability frameworks whose level of satisfaction is high according to their stakeholders.

The theory holds that such institutions with clearly defined and organized strategies towards sustainability will most likely enjoy a positive level of a larger proportion of positive feelings, or happiness, amongst its stakeholders.

H5: Greater awareness towards sustainability aims towards larger acceptance level of environmentally friendly strategies in HEI.

The assumption in such a scenario is that, with heightened awareness and understanding of stakeholder sustainability objectives, increased university acceptance and support for environmentally sound methodologies will follow.

These research questions and hypotheses form the skeleton of a structured inquiry on the status of sustainability practices in Indian HEIs, with a special focus on those located within the Delhi/NCR region. They also aim at actionable insights to improve sustainability efforts by stakeholder involvement and alignment with global goals on sustainability.

4. Objectives of the Study

The present study, therefore, attempts to systematically take stock of the status regarding sustainability-related higher education in HEIs of the Delhi/NCR region. It aims to identify lacunas in the existing understanding, implementation, and evaluation of sustainability initiatives in these institutions. The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. Exploring Various Initiatives on Sustainable Development at Universities

The definition of sustainability in HEIs goes from various initiatives related to greening the campus, energy efficiency projects, sustainability-focused curricula, and community outreach programs. The objective here is to identify the gamut of sustainability efforts that are undertaken by public and private universities in Delhi/NCR. This study will explore the breadth and depth of such initiatives to gain insight into the kinds of practices being prioritized, how these align with global sustainability goals, and the contextual factors driving their adoption.

Specific areas of focus under this objective include:

1. The use of renewable energies, energy conservation measures.
2. Waste management strategies, including recycling and biowaste processing.
3. Sustainable infrastructure development: developing green buildings with rainwater harvesting systems.
4. Integration of sustainability into academic curricula and research agendas.
5. Community engagement for programs on environmental awareness and action.

2. To assess criteria to evaluate universities for their sustainable practices.

The effectiveness of the practices of sustainability needs to be evaluated on certain laid-out criteria contextual in its setting. The aim would specifically be to demarcate key performance indicators and benchmarks that could be used to evaluate the sustainability performance of the

HEIs. A review of the already available sustainability assessment frameworks like STARS and GRI and its adaptation to the Indian context will eventually emerge with a robust set of evaluation criteria.

Key dimensions to be assessed include:

1. Environmental impact: Carbon footprint reduction, for instance, and resource conservation.
2. Social impact, including community benefits and stakeholder engagement.
3. Economic feasibility: This will focus on the cost-efficiency and long-term sustainability of initiatives.
4. Alignment to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4: Quality Education, and SDG 13: Climate Action.

3. The development of the model to evaluate the sustainability of the university by the perception of the stakeholders

Stakeholders are very important to achieve success in the field of sustainability at higher education. This objective is to develop an integrated model of university sustainability assessment, incorporating the viewpoints of various stakeholders. In the model, the contributions of different stakeholder groups-Students, Faculty/Staff, Alumni, and External Community-will be combined in order to make a comprehensive assessment of sustainability practices.

The proposed model will:

1. Identify key factors influencing stakeholder perceptions of sustainability.
2. Establish mechanisms for capturing and analyzing stakeholder feedback.
3. Provide actionable insights to help the universities further strengthen their sustainability strategies at universities with the contribution of their stakeholders.
4. A scalable framework that could be used in other regions and contexts to allow a cross-institutional comparison.

4. To carry out a comparative study on the use of sustainable initiatives at private versus public universities of the Delhi/NCR area.

Generally, there is a difference in priorities, resource availability, and the scope of operations that separates the approach to sustainability between public and private universities. Thus, the

objective of the present effort is to explore and compare the different sustainable practices already adopted or followed by the selected public and private HEIs of the Delhi/NCR region. The best practices, similarities, and differences emanating from a comparison across the concerned institutions will explain the relationship between institutional type and the progress made toward sustainability.

Key aspects of the comparative analysis made include:

1. Funding sources and their impact on sustainability initiatives.
2. Governance structures and decision-making processes related to sustainability.
3. Stakeholder engagement levels and their influence on sustainability outcomes.
4. How institutional culture plays a critical role in crafting attitudes towards sustainability.

It will provide an overall picture of the current state of sustainability within Indian HEIs and also put forward pragmatic recommendations that may help enhance their contribution to sustainable development. These objectives are also in tune with the broader goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, therefore, once again underline the role of education as a key driver of global change.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

This study will be done using the mixed-method approach to integrate the quantitative and qualitative methods in performing the analysis of sustainability practices at HEIs.

- Quantitative Analysis: This will be achieved through surveys, which can help capture numerical data of stakeholder perceptions and the prevalence of sustainable practices.
- Qualitative Analysis: Content analysis of university reports and policy documents will provide in-depth insights into the sustainability frameworks and initiatives implemented by HEIs.

5.2 Sources of Data

- **Primary Data:**

5. Structured surveys conducted among key stakeholder groups, including students, faculty, alumni, and staff.

- **Secondary Data**:

6. Published reports from HEIs, including but not limited to NAAC accreditation data, self-study reports, and institutional sustainability disclosures.
7. Academic publications and articles on sustainable practices and frameworks in HEIs.

5.3 Sample Selection

1. Geographical scope: This study covers the universities falling under the Delhi/NCR region for the sample and targets both public and private HEIs.

2. Sampling Method: Stratified random sampling to ensure a representative sample from different stakeholder groups and different types of universities. Strata include students, faculty, non-teaching staff, and alumni.

3. Sample Size: The sample size is approximately 700 respondents, divided among the various categories of stakeholders, as below:

- Students: 300
- Faculty: 150
- Alumni: 100
- Non-teaching Staff: 150

4. Data Collection Instruments: Structured Questionnaire covering four dimensions of sustainability:

1. Education: Curricula and programs related to sustainability.
2. Research: Research projects and publication on sustainable area.
3. Outreach: Community outreach and public education efforts.
4. Campus Management: Energy efficiency, waste management, and infrastructure.

5.4 Research Hypotheses and Statistical Tests

• H1: The stakeholders perceive the sustainable practices of universities as positive.

8. Descriptive statistics test: mean, median, mode, and one-sample t-test to find out if stakeholder perceptions are significantly different from neutral.

• H2: There is a significant difference between the sustainable practices of public and private universities.

9. Testing: Independent samples t-test or ANOVA in testing differences between sustainable practices among institutional types.

• H3: Stakeholder engagement level tells a lot about the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives.

- Test: Through the Pearson/Spearman correlation analysis, with multiple regression of the level of stakeholder engagement on initiative effectiveness.

• H4: Universities that have comprehensive sustainability frameworks show higher levels of satisfaction among stakeholders.

- Regression analysis: To test the presence of sustainability frameworks on stakeholder satisfaction.

• H5: There is a positive relationship between awareness of sustainability goals and the adoption of green practices in HEIs.

10. Testing includes: Chi-square test and Logistic regression to trace the relationship prevailing between awareness and different levels of its adoption.

5.5 Data Analysis Techniques

1. Descriptive Statistics: Describe data with means, medians, and standard deviation to understand general trends.
2. Inferential Statistics:
   - T-tests/ANOVA: Compare means across groups, such as public versus private universities.
   - Chi-square test: Analyze categorical data relationships.
3. Correlation and Regression Analysis: Examine the strength and direction of the relationships among the variables.
4. Qualitative Content Analysis: Thematic coding of secondary data in the form of reports and publications to identify the recurrent themes on sustainability.
5. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA): This is meant to ensure and confirm the factors affecting stakeholders' perception of sustainability practices.
6. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM): Shall be used to validate the proposed framework and test the relationships among variables.
7. Comparison: The study will make a comparison between the sustainability practices of public and private HEIs.

5.6 Assessment Framework

It shall, however, adopt the adapted framework for this study from models proposed by Naif Alghamdi and Alexandra den Heijer (2016), using four dimensions to base:

1. Education: Curricular development, sustainability course offerings, and student sustainability engagement.
2. Research: Number of sustainability-related research projects, publications, and funding.
3. Outreach: Community Programs, Partnerships and Sustainability Awareness.
4. Campus Management: Green infrastructure, renewable energy use, waste management, and resource conservation.

Each dimension will be measured by a set of indicators, while the perceptions of the stakeholders will be mapped onto these indicators to evaluate overall sustainability performance.

6. Scope of Study

The scope of this research proposal defines the boundaries within which the study shall be conducted. It highlights those key dimensions framing the investigation and the areas of focus that ensure the study remains well-defined, relevant, and manageable. The following are the major aspects of the scope of study:

1. Geographical Scope

The universities included fall in the Delhi/NCR area-one of the prominent educationally advanced metropolises in India. Thus, such geographical selection would portray vast institutional practices, including a mix of both public and private universities to constitute rich comparative analytical grounds. The focus on Delhi/ NCR allows this study to keep the investigation at a contextually relevant scale in regard to higher education in India but links it to the question of sustainability concerns as framed at the global scale.

2. Conceptual Scope

It discusses sustainability practices in HEIs based on four key dimensions:

a. Education: Integration of education in sustainability and concepts into the curriculum and educational programs.
b. Research: Inclusion of sustainability themes in research projects, publications, and funding initiatives.
c. Outreach: Community outreach and awareness on the issue through sustainable development projects.
d. Campus Management: Implement the use of green infrastructure, renewable energy, waste management practices, and efficient use of water.

The research also evaluates the perception of different stakeholders, including students, faculty, and alumni, regarding attitude and response in such attempts at sustainability. This dual focus on institutional practices and stakeholder engagement will ensure a holistic analysis.

3. Time Scope

The research focuses on sustainability practices implemented in the past five years, which is a time frame that permits the mapping of recent trends, challenges, and developments of the sustainability effort at each HEI. Five years is long enough to permit them to appraise the effects of the initiatives and also the evolution of the stakeholders' perceptions.

4. Analytical Scope

The study aims at:

a. Development of a model to assess sustainability for the parameters identified from Global Frameworks/Literature.
b. Conduct a comparative analysis between public and private universities to evaluate variations in sustainability practices, resource allocation, and stakeholder involvement.

This analytical approach ensures that the insights to be generated are actionable and can inform institutional strategies and policymaking.

5. Stakeholder Scope

Data will be collected amongst a diverse range of stakeholders that includes:

a. Students: Current enrollees across various disciplines.
b. Faculty: Academic staff who contribute to teaching and research.

c. Alumni: Past students who can provide perspective on institutional sustainability practices in retrospect.

The inclusion of diverse stakeholder groups will guarantee the capture of perceptions and attitudes from all aspects regarding sustainability initiatives.

6. Institutional Scope

The research covers various public and private universities in the Delhi/NCR region. This can enable a comparative study on how funding mechanisms, governance structures, and policy priorities shape their responses to the adoption of sustainability practices.

7. Thematic Scope

The research is also in line with the UN 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, particularly on targets pertaining to education, namely, SDG 4, responsible consumption and production-SDG 12, and climate action-SDG 13. The study will look at how HEIs contribute to these goals through their sustainable initiatives.

8. Scope-Methodology

It follows a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative content analysis. Such methodological diversity can enable nuanced comprehension of institutional practices and stakeholder perceptions. The research also uses advanced techniques of regression analysis, factor analysis, and comparative analysis to draw meaningful inferences.

The scope is clearly defined, ensuring that the study remains focused on its objectives while addressing relevant aspects of sustainability in Indian HEIs. The research will look into geographical, conceptual, temporal, analytical, and other dimensions with a view to providing a comprehensive framework for understanding and enhancing sustainability practices in universities.

7. Limitations of the Study

Although the present study is designed to present a comprehensive understanding of sustainability practice in Higher Education Institutions in the Delhi/NCR region, certain limitations need to be recognized. The following limiting factors will show that the scope of this research, methodology, and general applicability could be impacted by factors beyond the control of the researcher. These include the following:

1. Sample Limitations

Geographically, the study will be limited to universities in the Delhi/NCR region. This area, though having a good mix of public and private institutions, does not guarantee being fully representative of other parts of India or even other countries with respect to the practice or challenges of sustainability at universities.

2. Diversity among the Stakeholders

The research has focused, first of all, on the mainstakeholders, students, faculty, alumni, and non-teaching staff, and does not really represent all types of stakeholders. For example, statements by policy makers or from people in the industrial partnerships or government levels, who will make or can affect the policies regarding sustainability, have not been included; this might mean that some valuable inputs were missed.

3. Data Constraints

The data used in the investigation relies much on self-reporting by respondents and, thus may be prone to biases towards either over-reporting of positive or underreporting of challenges or difficulties. Another issue could be the exclusivity of documentation of data on sustainability from institutional published reports and published NAAC accrediting information into documented material itself, perhaps by excluding informal efforts at sustainability or any such efforts lacking in proper documenting.

4. Generalizability

Inferences of the findings of the present study apply only to higher education in general in the Indian context and within Delhi/ NCR in particular. Results may apply superficially, however generalization at best can hardly apply across universities in all other countries and regions, where different cultural and/or economic backgrounds prevail, also entailing possible other institutional settings.

5. Temporal Limitations

The research, therefore, focuses on the sustainability practice over the last five years. Though the period provides a snapshot of recent significant efforts, for which changes in sustainability practices or stakeholder perceptions may occur in times to come due to evolving policies and technologies besides global trends.

6. Constraints of Resources

In practice, the execution of this study had some time and financial limitations that make the study not as comprehensive as it could be in terms of the level of data collection or sample size or the number of universities under study. In addition, not all universities are very open to providing their data, especially when it covers financial or operational details regarding sustainability.

7. Limitations of Analytical

While the study uses a range of most modern statistical and analytical techniques, there is always a threat of interpretation bias or errors in the analysis. Some subtle aspects of the perceptions of stakeholders cannot be captured by structured surveys and questionnaires; hence, supplementation by qualitative methods becomes necessary.

8. Lack of Longitudinal Data

The study is a snapshot in time rather than a longitudinal analysis; it does not track the growth or development of practices and perceptions about sustainability over an extended period. This, therefore, limits its ability to draw conclusions about trends or long-term impacts.

Of course, recognition of these limitations serves to place findings from this study within the context of the study itself. These limitations may constrain the generalisability or scope of the study but at the same time may provide a future research direction, such as expansion of the geographical scope, addition of other stakeholder groups, and longitudinal analyses that could give further insights on HEI sustainability. Notwithstanding attention to these limitations, the study attempts to contribute something useful to the knowledge base on the understanding and enhancement of sustainability practices within Indian universities.

8. Expected Results

The proposed research intends to add to the wealth of actionable insight into the understanding of sustainability at Indian HEIs at both the academic and practical levels. The expected outcomes of this research are:

1. Identification of Sustainability Parameters Vital to Indian HEIs

The study will, therefore, identify and prioritize sustainability parameters relating to HEIs in India. These will include dimensions in education, research, outreach, and campus management, carefully adapted to the special challenges and opportunities of the Indian higher education ecosystem.

2. Insights into Priorities and Expectations from Stakeholders

This study will use analysis of the responses through surveys by students, faculty, alumni, and staff to yield a firm and specific determination of the priorities and expectations that key stakeholders attach to sustainability initiatives. This, therefore, is intended to give insights on how best to align such institutional efforts in pursuit of satisfying their stakeholder's needs and preference.

3. Development of an Overall Model for Sustainability Assessment

The most important expected impact is the development of a sustainability assessment model for HEIs based on global frameworks and adapted to the Indian context, which can be used to systematically evaluate efforts at universities toward sustainability.

4. Policy Recommendations for Effective Integration of Sustainable Practices at HEIs

This study will develop policy recommendations that would assist HEIs in implementing sustainable practices into their operations, curriculum, and governance. Recommendations would be developed focusing on the real actionability of enhanced stakeholder engagement, improved resource allocations, and the adoption of transparent reporting mechanisms.

5. Comparing Insights into Sustainable Practices within Public and Private Universities

The study compared and contrasted various initiatives on sustainability at both public and private universities to provide an indication of research based on diverse priorities, manners of resource usage, and stakeholder-engagement methods across higher education in general. In this respect, their insights will spur policymakers and academics serving in administrative appointments toward bridging voids and ensuring that best practices leak across institution-type.

6. Increased Understanding of the Obstacles to Sustainability

Some of the major barriers to the adoption of sustainable practices in HEIs are funding constraints, infrastructural challenges, and lack of awareness; this research will be able to identify some of them. This will provide a clear understanding that will help in the development of targeted strategies to overcome these obstacles.

7. Contribution to Achieving the United Nations SDGs

The study will align with the United Nations SDGs, specifically SDG 4 on Quality Education and SDG 13 on Climate Action, tracing the role of Indian universities within the scope of global sustainability efforts and pointing out how their potentials can be strengthened further.

8. Framework for Enhanced Stakeholder Engagement

The research will subsequently provide a framing of stakeholder involvement that outlines various ways in which HEIs would be able to involve students, faculties, and even alumni in these sustainability initiatives. This action plan will discuss how to widen participation, build good collaboration, or even use various stakeholder engagements to refine those sustainability practices adopted by the HEI academe.

9. Sustainability Benchmarking Tool

The study will deliver a benchmarking tool to allow universities to benchmark their sustainability practices against that of peer institutions. The tool will help HEIs in the identification of strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities toward the adoption of innovative approaches toward sustainability.

These will enrich academia with theoretical and practical insights on how to enhance the state of sustainability at Indian HEIs. Findings from the study will form a useful repository for administrators, policy planners, and other stakeholders who would want to embed such sustainable practices at their respective campuses that would potentially contribute toward national and global sustainability goals.

9. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations make part and parcel of any research work and, in the process, impart integrity and credibility to it. All avenues will be exhausted in adhering to key ethical codes, in use for safeguarding participants' dignity and anonymity and for holding them in dignity in exercise. All of the following actions must be taken in a move to comply in compliance with the high level of ethical practice in conduct of the research include:

1. Free and full consent of all participants in advance during data collection
2. In an effort to maintain anonymity and confidentiality of feedbacks of stakeholders for safeguarding individual information
3. Adherence to institution and regulatory requirements for ethical conduct of studies
4. Avoiding any coercion and undue influence in participant recruitment

5. An opportunity for respondents to withdraw at any stage, with no penalty to them
6. Transparency regarding purpose, techniques, and potential outcomes of the investigation
7. Shunning any misuse and misrepresentation of information gained in the study.
8. Using collected data exclusively for academic purposes and maintaining proper storage protocols.
9. Reporting findings truthfully and avoiding bias or manipulation of results to support pre-conceived conclusions.

10. Timeline - Proposed

The research will be done over a projected period of about 15-20 months, with each phase developed to be carried out with all due diligence regarding the study in question. A proposed timeline could look as follows:

1. Phase 1: Development and Approval of Proposal

    11. Finalization of research objectives, scope, and methodology.
    12. Securing ethical clearance from the institutional review board.

2. Phase 2: Literature Review

    13. A comprehensive review of the existing literature on sustainability in HEIs and stakeholder perceptions.
    14. Identification of gaps and refinement of the conceptual framework.

3. Phase 3: Designing the Questionnaire and Pilot Testing

    15. Developing survey instruments and interview guides.
    16. Conducting pilot tests to validate the questionnaire.
    17. Making necessary modifications based on feedback.

4. Phase 4: Data Collection

    18. Administering surveys to stakeholders: students, faculty, alumni, etc.
    19. Collecting secondary data from university reports and published articles.

5. Data Analysis Phase

    20. Quantitative analysis of survey data using statistical tools.
    21. Qualitative analysis of institutional reports and stakeholder feedback.
    22. Comparative analysis between public and private universities.

6. Phase 6: Development of Sustainability Model

    23. Creating an integrated model for sustainability assessment based on findings.
    24. Validating the model with experts' and stakeholders' input.

7. Phase 7: Writing and Compilation of Thesis

    25. Writing up individual chapters, including: introduction, methodology, results, discussion.
    26. Compiling and revising the complete thesis document.

8. Phase 8. Final Submission

    - Submission of the thesis to the university.
    - To incorporate final feedback and make corrections if necessary.

This is a very structured timeline to conduct the research, giving adequate time to each phase and providing quality in accordance with the rules of academic contribution. However, this can be adjusted in some instances if that is how challenges cannot be avoided or some specific requirements from either the university or stakeholders emerge.

11. Chapterisation Scheme

The proposed thesis is composed of seven chapters, each elaborating on an important aspect of the research. The structure provides logical progression and systematic exploration of the research objectives, enabling comprehensive understanding of sustainability practices in Indian Higher Education Institutions.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the research through the description of the context in which the study is to be set, together with the description of relevance. This section will therefore be related to the background of sustainability initiatives within the higher education sector, its meaning in view of institutional policy-making processes, and actual practices. Based on this background, a description of the research problem is given, specifying which gaps this investigation is trying

to fill. It also carries the statement of objectives and questions that set a guide in undertaking the study, and deliberations on its relevance to academics, policymakers, and HEI administrators. Establishing the context and rationale thus positions the frame through which this study is done: the scope and its purpose.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

It discusses a review of the existing literature in order to present the study within a wider academic discourse. These are some theoretical underpinnings for sustainability within higher education and comprise such frameworks as stakeholder theory and models related to the assessment of sustainability. It assesses both global and Indian experiences concerning practices with respect to sustainability at HEIs with regard to initiatives about education, research, outreach, and campus management. In this respect, the chapter is an important synthesis of previous studies identifying knowledge gaps in the literature on stakeholders' perceptions and regional differences in sustainability practices that are not reflected in the current state of knowledge. It also allows for the demarcation of a conceptual framework and methodological approach that will be undertaken in the present study.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter presents the design and methods used in conducting the study to achieve its objectives. It outlines the mixed-method approach adopted, integrating quantitative surveys and qualitative content analysis to comprehensively understand the topic. The chapter then goes on to explain the data collection techniques adopted, the method of sampling, instruments used, and the procedures followed in the conduct of the research work. It also explains the analytical techniques that were applied to interpret the data, including regression analysis and thematic coding. It is here that ethical considerations, such as informed consent, anonymity, and adherence to institutional guidelines, are elaborated to ensure the credibility and integrity of the research.

Chapter 4: Results of Content Analysis: University Sustainability Reports

This chapter discusses the results of the content analysis with regards to sustainability-related reports and institutional documents. Discussion will cover the scope and quality of disclosures regarding sustainability performance, referring to areas like education, research, outreach, campus management, but also comparative elements between public and private universities with specific regard to concerns and reporting on sustainability. This chapter seeks to analyze

such disclosures for insights on institutional transparency regarding sustainability initiatives in accordance with global standards.

Chapter 5: Results of Survey Analysis

This chapter presents the quantitative and qualitative results of the perceptions of students, faculty, alumni, and staff with regard to the sustainability practices their universities have adopted. It presents statistical insights on trends in stakeholder priorities, levels of satisfaction, and perceived barriers to sustainability. Thematic analysis of open-ended responses captures nuanced stakeholder perspectives. These findings point to the congruence or lack of congruence between institutional efforts and stakeholder expectations and thus provide a basis for further discussion and interpretation.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Interpretation of Results

This chapter synthesises the findings that stem from the performed content and survey analyses interpreted within a broader context framework on sustainability among HEIs, and discusses the ramifications of the data on theory and its practice, comparing them also to the theoretic frameworks and reviewed models in Chapter 2. The newness of the outcomes obtained is contextualised by how they reiterate or resist current perspectives associated with sustainability in higher education. As the results are interlinked and connected with each other through research questions and objectives, this chapter has contributed to an in-depth understanding of the relevance of the study through its findings.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

The final chapter concludes the thesis by summarizing the key findings and their implications. It offers some actionable recommendations to help HEIs advance their sustainability practices: comprehensive framework development, improved stakeholder engagement, and a premium on transparency regarding sustainability reporting. This chapter also discusses the policy implications of the study and how the institutional efforts can be aligned with the national and global goals of sustainability. It also has given a direction for future research which might be done by expanding the geographical scope, exploring longitudinal trends, or incorporating additional stakeholder perspectives. This chapter synthesizes the study's outcomes into a roadmap for advancing sustainability in higher education.

The scheme of chapterisation is bound to make the approach to the research objectives structured and organized. Each chapter leads to a comprehensive understanding that builds up

to an actionable insight, with recommendations on bringing improvement in sustainability practices in Indian HEIs. Such a structure therefore allows clarity and coherence, making the thesis worth much more for academic and practical purports.

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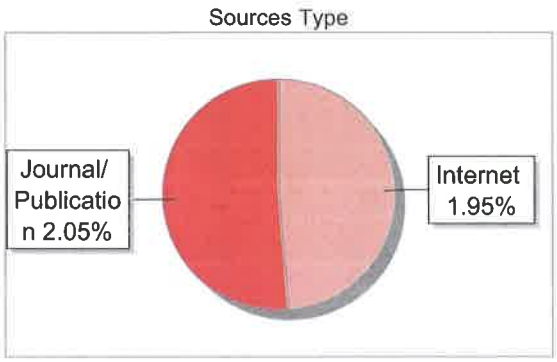

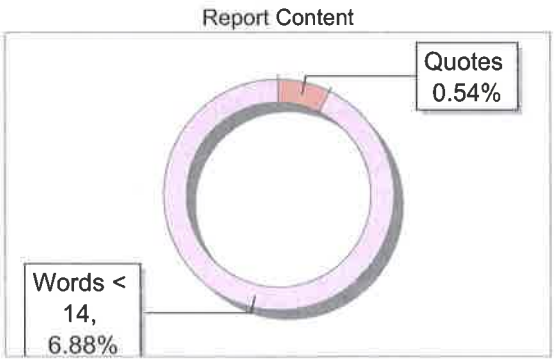

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A Study of Stakeholders' Perception towards Sustainable Practices Adopted by Universities

SHORT SYNOPSIS

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2025

Abstract

Introduction: *There is an emerging consensus that embedding sustainability within HEIs is increasingly vital in the global effort to move toward the United Nations SDGs. This present research focuses on the Delhi/NCR region, dealing with sustainability issues in HEIs from the lens of stakeholder perception. The paper fills the gaps between understanding, implementation, and assessments of sustainability frameworks in Indian Universities and bridges theoretical and practical insights.*

Objectives: *The paper reviews the range of sustainability-related initiatives within Indian HEIs; assesses criteria for reviewing such practices; develops a model for sustainability*

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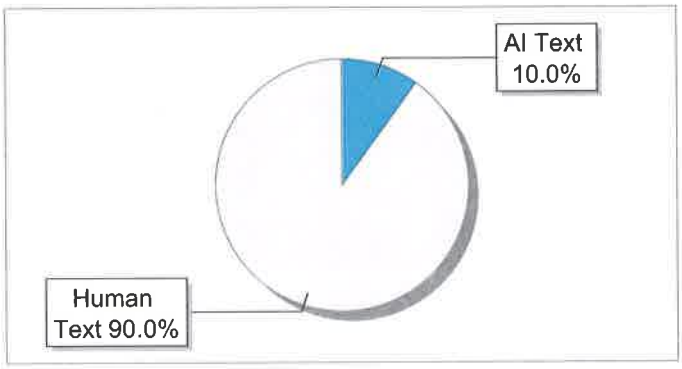

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